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# DISEASE SURVEILLANCE AND PREVENTION

JULY 2014 - JUNE 2022

\$ 32.7 MILLION

## OVERVIEW

Communicable diseases account for 60 to 80 percent of all outpatient visits and more than half of all deaths in Afghanistan. Controlling communicable diseases is one of the highest priorities for the Ministry of Public Health.

USAID supports the World Health Organization in the operation of a Disease Early Warning System (DEWS) to collect information on a weekly basis on 15 targeted communicable diseases. By monitoring sites in all 34 provinces, DEWS provides accurate and timely data on the outbreak of diseases and seasonal trends. Investigations result in quick action to mitigate disease outbreaks and prevent epidemics. DEWS also coordinates health surveillance in the field, disseminates public health information, and collaborates with the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and Expanded Program on Immunizations.

## ACTIVITIES

- **Infectious Disease Surveillance:** Selected health facilities operating in all 34 provinces of the country monitor fifteen priority infectious diseases and potential public health emergencies of international concern and report weekly to the Ministry of Public Health. This process strengthens the polio surveillance network in Afghanistan.
- **Outbreak Investigations and Response:** DEWS, in coordination with related stakeholders, investigates outbreak alerts received from health facilities or communities.
- **Disease Control Coordination:** DEWS holds disease control meetings in every province. The early warning system collaborates with programs at the national and provincial levels, to include cross-border coordination and notification on acute flaccid paralysis cases.
- **Training:** DEWS prepares staff and stakeholders on surveillance and outbreak response protocols.
- **Logistical Support:** Potentially infected specimens are collected in the field, then stored and transported at recommended temperatures for analysis at the Central Public Health Laboratory.
- **Quality Control:** DEWS has established internal standard operating procedures and external quality assurance measures for outbreak detection, for example, to deliver viral specimens to research facilities in Egypt and Pakistan for confirmation.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Initiated expansion of DEWS from 424 health facilities to over 2,000 health facilities.
- Improved immunity levels nationwide: 84 percent of Afghans are living in areas free of the polio virus.
- More than 420 field monitoring sites since early 2015 are providing accurate weekly surveillance reports on 15 priority diseases on a timely basis.
- The National Surveillance Directorate compiled and analyzed 100% of the weekly reports. The Ministry of Public Health disseminated the reports to donor groups, UN agencies, various ministries, and non-governmental organizations working in health service delivery.
- Conducted 16 targeted immunization days at the national and local level, including areas known for high infection risk.
- As a result of this surveillance network, almost 99 percent of outbreak alerts are investigated within 48 hours of notification.
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- Thanks to DEWS, diseases such as Q-fever and Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever were detected for the first time in Afghanistan, which allowed health workers to develop and distribute treatment and prevention guides for those and other infectious diseases.

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